



Neutropenia (Low Neutrophil Count)

Neutropenia is a condition that occurs when your neutrophil count is low. Neutrophils are white blood cells that fight infection. When your neutrophil count is low you are more prone to infection. You are considered neutropenic when your absolute neutrophil count (ANC), also called absolute granulocyte count (AGC), is 500 or less. To prevent or detect infection when you are neutropenic, you should follow these instructions.

Watch for Infection:

- ✓ Check your temperature every 4 hours while awake. Immediately notify your nurse or doctor if your temperature is
 - 101.0 °F (38.3 °C) or higher at any time
 - 100.4 °F (38.0 °C) or higher for one hour
 - 100.4 °F (38.0 °C) or higher two times in a 24-hour period
 - Check with your doctor before taking acetaminophen (Tylenol®). Do not take aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid), aspirin-containing products, ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®), or Percocet®
- ✓ Check your body for signs of infection in your mouth, on your skin, and around your rectum. Also check for signs of infection at any tube or catheter site (Hickman®, Port-a-Cath®, PICC). Immediately notify your nurse or doctor if you have any of these signs of infection:
 - redness, swelling, tenderness, or drainage
 - rash, fever, chills, cough, headache, or stiff neck
 - diarrhea, bloody or cloudy urine, or painful or frequent urination

Hygienic Precautions:

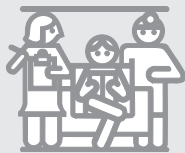
- ✓ Wash your hands often, especially before preparing food and eating, and after using the toilet, blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- ✓ Shower or bathe daily. If your skin becomes dry, use lotion or oil to soften and prevent cracking.
- ✓ Perform mouth care before and after meals, and at bedtime. Use a soft toothbrush and mouth rinses without alcohol. Do not floss. Consult your NIH doctor before having dental work done.
- ✓ When out of bed, wear shoes or slippers to protect your feet from injury.

- ✓ Avoid manicures and pedicures.
- ✓ If you cut or scrape your skin, clean this area immediately with soap and warm water and apply a bandage. Check the site daily for signs of infection.
- ✓ Use an electric shaver rather than a razor.
- ✓ Do not use enemas, rectal thermometers, or suppositories. Women should not use tampons, vaginal suppositories, or douches.
- ✓ Use water-based lubricants such as K-Y Jelly® to reduce friction during vaginal intercourse. Avoid oral and rectal intercourse.

General Precautions:

- ✓ Avoid large crowds and people with infections or colds. Be careful particularly near school-age children.
- ✓ Avoid people who have recently received Sabin oral polio and chicken pox (varicella) vaccines.
- ✓ Check with your NIH doctor before receiving immunizations and injections.
- ✓ Use gloves and a mask when gardening.
- ✓ Do not clean birdcages, cat litter boxes, or fish tanks.
- ✓ Limit exposure to pets, fresh flowers, house plants, and stagnant water (humidifiers, water pitchers, water in a vase).
- ✓ Do not swim.
- ✓ Do not eat raw or undercooked eggs, fish, shellfish, meat, or poultry, or uncooked aged cheese, or soft cheese. **Eat only well-cleaned raw vegetables and fruits.** Refer to “Don’t Let Your Food Make You Sick” for more food safety tips.

Where applicable, brand names of commercial products are provided only as illustrative examples of acceptable products, and do not imply endorsement by NIH; nor does the fact that a particular brand name product is not identified imply that such product is unsatisfactory.



This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

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